

Sermon on Christmas Day 2006.12.25

(Pastor Wolf is going to start with the blessing and a short introduction; then Andrea continues.

As I look at the Christmas story, I am in awe. Not just that Jesus was born, but about Mary. I wonder what she must have felt like to give birth to a child that even before he was born would have a great purpose.

When we think about a baby being born, we envision a tiny person, a little miracle or as some might say, “A bundle of joy”. Can we possibly look at a tiny baby and think “a savior?” How can we believe that a little creature not even able to care for themselves could be a savior to the world? Can we even begin to see the plans of God? Yet, here we are today among others who believe this very thing.

But let us go back and see how the mother of the child must have felt like:

Mary. Let us start with her name. What does the name “Mary” mean? In Hebrew, it means “the perfect one” Mary was given the task to be the mother of Christ because God saw her as the perfect one for the task. But can we try to imagine what it would be like to be in her shoes?

I would like to tell the story as if we were Mary:

You are betrothed to a carpenter which at the time may have been a respectable trade. Your family has just approved the wedding, and you will soon be making plans for the celebration. You are feeling assured that your life will be ok. That this kind man will be there to look after you, protect you, and be at your side. You settle into bed for a restful sleep. Then literally over night everything changes. An angel tells you that you are pregnant, and you will be the mother of God’s child. What are you suppose to say? The angel leaves, and I am sure your good night’s sleep will never be carried out, because this is not just any regular news. So after a not so good sleep, you now have to tell your betrothed that you are pregnant, and too boot, it’d God’s baby. You will think he will never believe me. Which why would he, this is crazy. Now of course you tell him and as expected he breaks the engagement. And you are now known as a scarlet, the whole town will most likely drag you out of your house for a stoning, in which the likely hood of survival is close to none. You’re scared. Your home town will surely disown you, and your fiancé is no longer there to protect you.

In the midst of it all, you cry out to God, “Why, why are you doing this to me. Even if I did survive this, what kind of life would this child have?” - And our ever faithful God answers you by the presence of your once betrothed. he stands before you, explaining that in a dream an angel had come, and told him what he is do. He than takes your hand, and promises he will be there, and be the earthly father to this special child. Your fears have subsided, and peace now fills your heart. God had come through and answered your cries.

As the pregnancy goes on, life has its hardships but things are mostly good. Until you and you husband are now forced to do a census. You are coming very close to labor. But there is nothing you can do about it, you have to go. There is no room anywhere, and you panic as you feel labor pains begin. Time is running out, and still there is no where to rest your head. Afraid, you cry out to God again. “Help us, how can I have this baby in these streets, please!” And again in the nick of time, God comes through, and your husband has found a small barn for the night.

You are plenty aware that some women don’t survive giving birth, and you feel so helpless knowing that you and your husband are alone in this. But somehow you manage; you and your baby are healthy. You look down at this tiny baby boy, tears come down your face as you wonder if anyone else in the world will ever know just how special he really is. As you smile down at him you hear a noise coming closer to you. When you look up, Sheppard’s have come to you and your baby, they bow their heads. You look towards you

husband but his attention is directed in the far distance, were three greatly dressed men are making their way towards your stable. Thinking they would pass you by, but they too stop and bow down to this little child. You then wonder, "How could they know, how can it be that they are aware of the importance of my baby?". But then you remember, maybe the same way you came to know of this special child. Before the wise men left, they warned your small family that harm will come to this child if they do not leave. So you go, you escape to a safe place in Egypt and stay there for some time. Then you return to Nazareth, raising your baby and teaching him his father's trade. You worry about him like any mother would, caring for him the only way you know, loving him. Loving him so much that as you were the first person He saw when life was given to him, you were also the last person who saw when life was taken from Him. Bowing their heads where the wise man and shepherd's when your son was born. And you, bowing at your son's feet, when he dies. Surrendering the hardest thing a mother could ever give up: The life of a child you loved with every breath you took.

If we only see in this birth in the stable of Bethlehem the glorious birth of the Saviour of this world, we may think that being the parents of this child and raising the son of God might be like winning the lottery. You have this amazing gift, this treasure, you are entrusted with this important task and you are chosen by God and therefore very special. But Mary and Joseph stayed with both feet on the ground. They lived a simple life, and tried to make life normal. Even though, their son was the promised one, the child that fulfilled all the prophecies, they understood that they were just people, normal everyday people God had a great plan for.

But in this regard, that we are all, with the only exception of this son of God who was born that night in this stable, just people, but given an extraordinary task, just like Mary and Joseph. God has also all of us given a purpose, a plan. Ok, it may not be to raise the son of God, but we all have a purpose, and it may not be what we think it is.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

I thought for the longest time I was going to be a singer, that one day I would be famous, have lots of money, and really make something of myself in this world. Then like Mary, everything changed. My life was thrown for a loop. My whole life was turned upside down, and I had no idea what I was doing. Everything I did turned wrong, every plan I made never worked out. I would constantly return home defeated and disappointed that yet another attempt in my life's plan had failed. I was beginning to wonder if I would ever succeed in anything. I spend a year at home, confused and troubled. Angry at the world and myself, I tried to heal my wounds alone. It took me a whole year to cry out to God, a whole year! But then one night I gave up and cried, and then prayed. It had been two years since I prayed. I asked God to forgive me, and I told him I would understand if he would never love me again as he did when I was a child. After many tears and words, I fell asleep. When I woke up, my heart was filled with a fire, and a love I had never felt before. I could see and hear words written and spoken on my heart. "Don't you ever think I don't love you, don't you ever think I would never forgive you, you are my child, and I love you" I knew, I knew at that moment my life would be changed forever. I spilled out of no where I was going to bible school, and made the arrangements that very day. I look back now, and see I was never supposed to be a singer; my voice is a gift, to be used to praise God, and warm the hearts of others. What my real purpose is to love. And to use my life as a way to relate to others who are lost and lonely.

In 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 ⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that

Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I know now that the reason why I failed at every attempt to plan my life was simply because God wanted to use me somewhere else. It took God to shake my heart and open my eyes to see it. We are all called by God, but we let things distract us along the way, like doing what we want, and focused on what our dreams and wishes are. But as written in Jeremiah, His plans are not to harm us, but to prosper us. God knows our dreams; we just need to trust him. Mary didn't ask to be "the perfect one"; she was just an ordinary young woman, asked to do an extra ordinary task.

And maybe there is just one thing which differentiates us from her, and that is her faithfulness and trust, that if God plans something for us, it going to work.

Amen.